North Korea and the Bomb

Stanley Weintraub

ON 30 NOVEMBER 1950 at a press conference in Washington, D.C., President Harry S. Truman inadvertently suggested that General Douglas MacArthur as "military commander in the field" had the authority to unleash atomic bombs. That same day, General George E. Stratemeyer in Tokyo sent a cable to General Hoyt S. Vandenberg requesting that the Strategic Air Command (SAC) should be "prepared to dispatch without delay medium bomb groups to the Far East. . . .This augmentation should include atomic capabilities."[1] MacArthur's staff was clearly rattled about the possibility of Dunkirks in Korea, or a humiliating armistice.

At 8:30 a.m. the next day in Washington, a high-level meeting that included just about every policy maker but the president convened in the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) conference room in the Pentagon. Chairman General Omar Bradley worried whether MacArthur could hold at any point in North Korea, and whether Chinese air power would have to be interdicted so that troops at worst might withdraw safely. "To do so might draw in the Soviet air [force]. If this is true, we might have to defer striking."

Army Chief of Staff Lawton Collins supported Bradley. "If we hit back, it is a strong provocation of the Chinese and may possibly bring in Soviet air and even submarines. The only chance then left to save us — if that happened — is the use or the threat of use of the A-Bomb. We should therefore hold back from bombing in China even if that means that our ground forces must take some punishment from the air." He was beginning to think that Korea "was not worth a nickel."

"If we do hit back," Secretary of State Dean Acheson warned, "it may bring in Russian air support of the Chinese and we would go from the frying pan into the fire."

"We would have to evacuate [Korea] and probably would be engaged in war [with Russia]," General Bedell Smith, the new CIA chief, predicted. At that, Collins contended that the United States would have to "consider the threat or the [actual] use of the A-Bomb. It would [otherwise] be very difficult to get our troops out."[2]

Bernard Baruch, long a White House adviser on military and atomic matters, visited George Marshall to press on him the feeling in the country, "in view of what is regarded as a very desperate situation"—the massive Chinese intervention—"for use of the atomic bomb." He didn't think it would "do any good in the circumstances," and questioned what it could be "dropped on."

Later in the day, Bernard Baruch, long a White House adviser on military and atomic matters, visited Defense Secretary George Marshall, who had been at the JCS meeting, to press on him the feeling in the country, "in view of what is regarded as a very desperate situation"— the massive Chinese intervention —"for use of the atomic bomb." Marshall observed that he didn't think it would "do any good in the circumstances," and questioned what it could be "dropped on." The Chinese, he claimed, "were totally unmoved by this threat. . . . Their propaganda against American aggression was stepped up." Marshall scoffed at the Nehru-Panikkar claims of neutrality as an "Indian rope trick."

While atomic talk was swirling about Washington and British Prime Minister Clement Attlee was flying to the United States to confront Truman, General Curtis LeMay, SAC chief and former commander of the 20th Air Force, which had deployed the bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, responded to the message from Stratemeyer. The SAC understanding, said LeMay, had been that nuclear weap-

ons, according to an earlier JCS advisory, would not be used except during "an overall atomic campaign against China." If the situation had actually changed, he wanted to be in on the deployment. He and his men, he boasted, were the only ones with the knowledge required to deliver atomic bombs.[3]

Preparing on 3 December for Attlee's hurried visit, State Department officials reminded the JCS of "the rather widespread British distrust of MacArthur and the fear of political decisions he may make based on military necessity. Bearing on this is the British belief in the [establishment of a] buffer area and their stand against [UN] attacks across the Yalu. Also involved is the fear of the effect on Asiatics of use of the atomic bomb or even open consideration of its use." British concerns, Acheson went on, were "very sincere." MacArthur had already compiled a history of flouting orders.

Throughout the agonized preparatory State-Defense conference in the Pentagon's JCS War Room, unaware that he would soon become MacArthur's top general in Korea, Matthew Bunker Ridgway sat impatiently. During the review of the situation, he saw "no one apparently willing to issue a flat order to the Far East Commander to correct a state of affairs that was rapidly going from bad to disastrous. Yet the responsibility and the authority clearly resided right there in the room." He spoke up, but Air Force Chief of Staff Vandenberg dismissed the idea of sending MacArthur further orders. "What good would that do? He wouldn't obey the orders."

Ridgway exploded, "You can relieve any commander who won't obey orders, can't you?" The meeting ended with no decision about MacArthur except for sending Collins back to Tokyo to consult with him. The participants did agree that Truman should make no commitment to Attlee or anyone else restricting American freedom of action on using the Bomb. It might, in extreme circumstances, have to be used. Yet Truman realized that if under inauspicious tactical conditions for its employment in Korea it failed to produce decisive results, it would lose all credibility as a Cold War deterrent. He had already been in office — and had the ultimate authority to approve the deployment — when the Nagasaki bomb, the first and only plutonium bomb exploded upon an enemy, was detonated. The hills and valleys upon which Nagasaki was situated had minimized the blast impact as well as the secondary effects of the explosion. That bomb, the only uranium device in the American stockpile, had detonated over an alluvial plain, though it packed more power than the earlier Hiroshima bomb, neither case compared to the rugged Korean terrain.

There was never any concern about depleting precious fissionable material or stockpiled weapons, since the 292 bombs the US possessed in June were being supplemented weekly. The Soviets had at best

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10 to 20 bombs by the end of 1950 — enough, nevertheless, to cause widespread panic in Washington.

Collins was then back in Tokyo, this time with Air Force intelligence chief General Charles Cabell, a vigorous proponent of atomic weapons. They found MacArthur now optimistic that he could stabilize what he conceded was a poor situation. He even advised postponing any decisions on nuclear deployment until he knew whether the atomic option would be needed to cover a total evacuation from Korea. Still, the combination of Cabell's being brought along to Japan, and Truman's stonewalling Attlee about the bomb, now emboldened MacArthur to ask for it. As a matter of prudence, since the atomic-configured aircraft sent to cover a possible withdrawal from Pusan had already returned to California, he requested on 9 December that the Pentagon grant him a field commander's discretion to employ nuclear weapons as necessary. He wanted them stockpiled in Okinawa, within his Japanese jurisdiction.[4]

Despite that, when queried by the Joint Chiefs later in the month about how he would respond to Soviet intervention or more massive Chinese intervention intended to drive reeling UN troops completely from Korea, he again refused to consider using the bomb. However, to prevent the ultimate fallback, and a Dunkirk, MacArthur would make an exception. The war might have to be widened, he suggested, to forestall termination of his mission.

Even Truman agreed about the risk of loss of face in Asia, especially in Japan. With the Japanese repercussions of defeat in mind as well as the ongoing retreat in Korea, MacArthur on 24 December



(*Left to right*) Generals Matthew B. Ridgway; Douglas MacArthur and J. Lawton Collins; Omar N. Bradley and Hoyt S. Vandenberg; (*facing page*) President Harry S. Truman and Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall; Secretary of State Dean Acheson; and General Curtis LeMay.

proposed to "blockade the coast of China, destroy through naval gunfire and air bombardment China's industrial capacity to wage war" and "release existing restrictions upon the Formosan garrison. . . possibly leading to counter-invasion against vulnerable areas of the Chinese mainland."

Whether or not that would escalate the war — the situation since the Chinese intervention remained grim — he sent the Pentagon a list of what he described as "retardation targets" for which he wanted 34 atomic bombs. Of these, four were (in Paul Nitze's description) to drop on Chinese troop masses and four were for "critical concentrations of enemy air power."[5] Since no such airfields existed in Korea, the bombs had to be meant for Manchuria.[6]

Much later, in talking to General Dwight D. Eisenhower (17 December 1952) about ending the war, MacArthur (no longer in a position of responsibility) explained where he thought nuclear bombs would have done the most good. "I would have dropped between 30 and 50 atomic bombs . . . strung across the neck of Manchuria" and "spread behind us — from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea — a belt of radioactive cobalt. . . . For at least 60 years there could have been no land invasion of Korea from the north." The Russians, he claimed, would have been intimidated into restraint by the boldness of the act.

Cobalt 60, from the reprocessing of plutonium, would have possessed such powerful radioactivity as to endanger populations remote from the drop zone. Yet MacArthur was not suggesting an ex post facto science fiction fantasy. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had already discussed a radioactive *cordon sanitaire* sown north of the Manchurian border, and it had even been proposed — if unrealistically — in Congress by Representative (later Senator) Albert Gore Sr. of Tennessee, a member of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy who had probably received the details from a physicist at the Oak Ridge atomic facility in his home state. Since Korea had become "a meat grinder of American manhood," Gore felt that it would be "morally justifiable under the circumstances" to make any communist soldier who crossed the radioactive "neutral zone" risk "certain death or slow deformity."[7] Ignored were the potential ill effects on the soldiers or airmen who would have to deliver the "hot" waste, or that means might be employed by the enemy to fly over the radioactivity, or even to bridge it. The proposal, nevertheless, remains linked to MacArthur, who had merely borrowed it in frustration.

On the evening after Christmas, Truman convened a meeting at Blair House, where he was living while the White House was undergoing renovation, that included Acheson, Marshall, Bradley and the State Department's assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, Dean Rusk. He wanted to discuss options in Korea — whether "we could hold our position there, what we should do if we could not." Rusk ticked off the alternatives the first of which he admitted was "beyond our capabilities" — to win a military victory and stabilize Korea by force. The second involved making it in China's interest "to accept some stabilization" because it would be too costly to the country otherwise. The third was "to get out in defeat voluntarily or under pressure." He preferred the second possibility.

Acheson wondered whether Russia would try to deny the United States any middle course, which brought Rusk to observe that if the Soviets had wanted "a general war," they would have already come in and blocked any withdrawal from North Korea, exacerbating the disaster. "We took the risk in June that entry into Korea would lead to general war." The same sort of risk could arise, he thought, "at any time in Europe."

In a worst-case scenario, Philip Jessup, ambassador at large for UN affairs, asked whether the United States had the "air capabilities of knocking



(*Photo credits, left to right*)
War in Korea, Presidio Press
US Army
US Army
Airbridge to Berlin, Presidio Press
Jim Keith
Airbridge to Berlin, Presidio Press

out both Port Arthur and Vladivostock," from which the Soviets would have to launch any attack to deny Korea to the United States.

"We did not, except by using the atom bomb," admitted Rusk.

MacArthur would keep probing for "field" permission, in an emergency, to deploy the bomb while recognizing its futility — even when, concurrently and without his knowledge, Washington never ceased bringing up the subject. On 6 January 1951, Ridgway, new to the Eighth Army after the death of General Walton Walker in a jeep accident just before Christmas, asked MacArthur about employing chemical weapons "as a last resort to cover the withdrawal and evacuation from a final beachhead." MacArthur's reply the next day suggested that similar conditions would apply for nuclear weapons. "I do not believe there is any chance of using chemicals on the enemy in case evacuation is ordered. As you know, US inhibitions on such use are complete and drastic and even if our own government should change this attitude, it is most improbable that the membership of the United Nations would be in accord." Later in January he informed Ridgway that he was against forward deployment of atomic weapons. The likelihood of forced evacuation had faded, and Ridgway's Eighth Army had firmed up its positions.

South Korean president Syngman Rhee also asked, through American ambassador John Muccio, to have MacArthur authorized to use any weapon, including the atomic bomb. Ridgway, consulted by Muccio, confessed that he had no idea where the nearest A-Bomb was. In any case, no chance existed for MacArthur to control a nuclear device.

Meanwhile, LeMay told Vandenberg confidently, if unrealistically, that with three days' preparation his command could deploy 135 A-Bombs over Korea and China. In a memo to Truman, National Security Resources Board head Stuart Symington, later secretary of the Air Force, warned that the growing Soviet atomic stockpile would force the United States to draw the line at established frontiers and to warn Russia that its aggression would mean atomic war. If the United States waited too long for that deterrence it would have to fold its hand. Truman wrote "Not True" and "Bunk" in the margins and added on the last page, "My dear Stu, this is [as] big a lot of Top Secret malarky as I've ever read. Your time is wasted on such bunk as this[.] H.S.T."[8]

Atomic weapons decisions [in early April 1951] could not be withheld from Congress's Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. Eighteen legislators, many of them leak-prone, were involved, some of them also likely to be strong critics of relieving MacArthur. Truman may have even intended some leakage of his atomic intentions, as the show of forcefulness would demonstrate that his shakeup in the Far East meant no weakness in prosecuting the war.

Possibly the most ironic reference to the bomb during MacArthur's tenure occurred in a top-secret report prepared for the National Security Council (NSC) on "Recommended Policies and Actions in Light of the Grave World Situation." Dated 11 January 1951, the study again surveyed the possibilities of general war with the Soviets over Korea, Formosa, Japan or "from any of the sparks which will fly as the communists move further into Southeast Asia. In Europe, the explosiveness of the situation needs no spelling out." It was a Cold War document in all particulars.

"Above all," the NSC study urged, "there should be political utilization, on behalf of NATO and the rest of the free world, of the [strong] current United States position resulting from possession of the atom bomb, and ability to deliver it. Atomic bombing by itself cannot win a war against Soviet Russia, but today it is the most powerful military weapon. In

this world of power politics, therefore, it should be further utilized in political negotiation. Even though our atomic bombing capability is our prime military advantage, should a war with Russia occur within the next 18 months, United States long-range strategic air power will be of limited strength because of obsolescence, lack of equipment and lack of advance warning."

Advocating devices that could be pinpointed, Oppenheimer contended that nuclear explosives "can only be used as adjuncts in a military campaign that has other components, and whose purpose is a military victory." Only when the atomic bomb became an "integral part of military operations," he thought, would it be "of much help in the fighting of a war." If entirely a weapon of increasingly mass destruction, mankind would ban it.

In sum, the NSC study suggested that rattling the bomb was worth the risk — and indeed its potential would help end the war in 1953 after the crucial fact of Stalin's death. With his paranoia no longer a factor, it became possible for Eisenhower to convey, via Jawaharlal Nehru of India, American consideration of employing new tactical nuclear weapons to break the deadlock over an armistice. It was a gamble a minority president could not take; nor were the weapons yet ready to deploy in 1950.

Reacting to the Korean War and to assumed Soviet complicity in it, Congress had already increased AEC appropriations. Beginning that January the nuclear testing program moved from the remote Pacific to desolate — but domestic—Nevada, where radioactive clouds from above-ground detonations would send messages to Moscow and radioactive carbon 14 over the United States. According to the minutes of one meeting at Los Alamos, officials planning the tests secretly discussed "the probability that people [downwind from the explosions] will receive perhaps a little more radiation than medical authorities say is absolutely safe."

Early in April, exasperated by MacArthur's continued insubordination, which included talk of taking the war into China, Truman began planning the supreme commander's dismissal. On 7 April he consulted top advisers at Blair House, but postponed any action until the joint chiefs met. But the president, sensing Marshall's continuing reluctance to face likely political repercussions from the Right, suggested that before they gathered on Monday for a final decision, he go through the cable traffic between MacArthur and Washington, at least since the beginning of the war.

In the exchange of cables, most of them routine, was a MacArthur request to the Pentagon on 10 March certainly encouraged by hawks in Washington, asking for "atomic capability" to take out Manchurian airfields if that became necessary to retain air superiority north of the 38th parallel. The revived on-again, off-again nuclear messages would continue as a paradoxical counterpoint to the agonized exchanges over relieving MacArthur — expanded war juxtaposed with realpolitik peace. Four days later, Vandenberg replied to Tokyo that the secretary of the Air Force Thomas K. Finletter and the under secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett had gone along: "Finletter and Lovett alerted on atomic discussions. Believe everything is set." On 31 March Stratemeyer reported to MacArthur that atomic bomb loading pits at the Kadena air base on Okinawa were operational and that unassembled Mark IV bombs were on hand. The suggested threat to American domination in the air had existed since late November, when Rusk informed the British that the Russians had moved 200 twin-engined TU-4 bombers to Manchurian bases. They remained cause for anxiety although Moscow hesitated risking its own pilots on Premier Kim Il Sung's behalf.

Now there was further concern from Tokyo that a "major attack" originating from Shantung province and Manchuria was pending to push UN forces away from the 38th parallel. Bradley hoped the nuclear threat would initiate the armistice negotiations that MacArthur's political intrusions had apparently torpedoed, or at worst strike enemy concentrations about to escalate the war. He had brought a JCS recommendation to the president on 6 April, dated the day before, authorizing MacArthur—despite the crisis atmosphere about him — to initiate a preemptive strike if an attack appeared to be materializing. Between the lines was the possibility that such a nuclear warning, certain to emerge via press leakage, might have the intended persuasive effect on Mao.

Truman telephoned AEC chairman Gordon Dean, who came immediately to the White House. The bomb, Truman confided, might, if conditions became desperate, be employed beyond, rather than within, Korea, but he would reserve the decision for its use until he had consulted with the NSC's special committee on atomic energy. Dean telephoned Vandenberg for the president, authorizing transfer of nine nuclear cores "from AEC to military custody." The next day, 7 April, as MacArthur was about to be fired, the 99th Medium Bomb[er] Wing in California was ordered to pick up the bombs for delivery to Guam,

An early nuclear test in the Nevada desert sends a message to Moscow.

US Army

but *not* to proceed to Okinawa as originally planned for "possible action against retardation targets" — Chinese or Soviet sites. Since the deployment was purely cautionary, the strike force commander would remain in Nebraska at SAC headquarters rather than fly with his B-29s to Japan.

Since MacArthur's proconsulship was about to terminate, JCS chairman Bradley also held up a directive to MacArthur, although authorized by Truman and Acheson, that permitted, if necessary, retaliatory strikes on an approved list of targets outside Korea. Late that Sunday, 8 April, the joint chiefs had met again to consider recalling MacArthur, and recognized that during a transfer of command, orders with atomic potential were best held in abeyance.[9] The personnel changes in Tokyo, which would inevitably and quickly remove a cadre of MacArthur intimates, might improve prospects for a peaceful end to the war far more than even suggesting the nuclear option.

Atomic weapons decisions could not be withheld from Congress's Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. Eighteen legislators, many of them leak-prone, were involved, some of them also likely to be strong critics of relieving MacArthur. Truman may have even intended some leakage of his atomic intentions, as the show of forcefulness would demonstrate that his shakeup in the Far East meant no weakness in prosecuting the war. And he began preparing his radio speech to the nation explaining why he decided to replace MacArthur, whose critics erroneously assumed that he, most of all, wanted to release the nuclear genie from the AEC bottle.

"Above all," the NSC study urged, "there should be political utilization, on behalf of NATO and the rest of the free world, of the [strong] current United States position resulting from possession of the atom bomb, and ability to deliver it. . . . In this world of power politics, therefore, it should be further utilized in political negotiation.". . . With Stalin's death in 1953, his paranoia was no longer a factor, and it became possible for Eisenhower to convey American consideration of employing new tactical nuclear weapons to break the deadlock in Korea.

Although MacArthur did not know about it in Tokyo, the TX-5 (experimental tactical atomic weapon) program had been accelerated during the wartime summer of 1950, and a production directive issued on 11 July. The AEC had high expectations for the M[AR]K-5 and other small fission weapons. Housed in a lightweight casing with an outside diameter of 45 inches, the MK-5 had a predicted energy release of 60,000-70,000 tons of TNT, three or four times the explosive power of the Nagasaki bomb. It could be carried by medium bombers. Soon after came the TX-7, with an energy yield of 15,000-20,000 tons of TNT, which could be carried by fighter aircraft. As that was tested early in 1951, a young physicist confessed being "hooked on tactical nuclear weapons" was asked to go to Korea on a secret mission "to see if, in [his] opinion, there was any good way to use atomic bombs in that war."[10] The visit had to be guarded even from Air Force headquarters, as, the physicist recalled, it was "almost totally SAC-dominated (SAC, in those days, spelled *LeMay*)," and "locked in a bitter battle with the US scientific community (which, in those days, spelled *Oppenheimer*) over the issue of tactical nuclear weapons.

LeMay was uninterested in experimenting further on relatively portable low-yield bombs. His ultimate requirement was for as much blast and heat as possible. He had told physicist Sam Cohen, "you guys develop a bomb that could destroy all of Russia." Small tactical bombs would undermine SAC's strategic H-bomb monopoly. Advocating devices that could be pinpointed, J. Robert Oppenheimer contended that nuclear explosives "can only be used as adjuncts in a military campaign that has other components, and whose purpose is a military victory." They should be, he proposed, "weapons used to give combat forces help that they would otherwise lack" rather than "weapons of totality or terror." Only when the atomic bomb became an "integral part of military operations," he

A B-29 Superfortress takes off from Okinawa for a mission against communist targets in Korea. On 7 April, as MacArthur was about to be fired, the 99th Medium Bomb Wing in California was ordered to pick up the bombs for delivery to Guam, but *not* to proceed to Okinawa as originally planned.

War in Korea, Presidio Press

MacArthur later explained to Eisenhower where he thought nuclear bombs would have done the most good. I would have dropped between 30 and 50 atomic bombs . . . strung across the neck of Manchuria" and "spread behind us—from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea—a belt of radioactive cobal. . . . For at least 60 years there could have been no land invasion of Korea from the north." The JCS had already discussed a radioactive* cordon sanitaire*, and it had even been proposed—if unrealistically—in Congress by Albert Gore Sr. who had probably received the details from a physicist at the Oak Ridge atomic facility in his home state.

thought, would it be "of much help in the fighting of a war." If it became entirely a weapon of increasingly mass destruction, mankind would ban it.

To mask his mission from the LeMay types, Cohen, who had dropped out of graduate school at Berkeley in the middle 1940s, was to go to Korea on an "orientation tour," to observe a war actually being fought, keeping to himself until his return "any ideas I picked up about how atomic weapons might be used, for fear somebody might get the idea we were seriously contemplating such use." Independently, the Far East Air Force (FEAF) in Tokyo in a study coded ORO-R-3 and dated 1 February 1951, estimated that had an air-burst atomic bomb of 40-kiloton size (twice that of Nagasaki) been exploded over Chinese military concentrations at Taechon, between Siniuju on the Yalu and Anju, north of Pyongyang, on 25 November 1950, possibly 15,000 of the 22,000 troops concentrated there might have been destroyed. Six 40-kiloton bombs dropped over the Pyongyang-Chorwon-Kumhwa "Iron Triangle" between 27 and 29 December might have eliminated half of nearly 100,000 of the enemy. The survey went on to estimate other scenarios which never happened into early January, but intelligence had not known then of dense assemblages of enemy troops, and UN positions nearby might have suffered substantially. That the bomb would have been impractical under the chaotic conditions then prevailing must have been clear to MacArthur, who never used the study as an excuse to request atomic weapons. Their use might have boomeranged on his own forces.

Cohen's instructions, looking ahead to more practical weaponry, came in a meeting with Colonel (later General) Ben Schriever, who ran the Air Force's "long-range planning shop." Low-yield tactical weapons, Schriever thought, would waste "precious little fissile material" and, if given an accelerated production priority, could be used against the

communists. He would give the very young Cohen, a civilian, the assimilated rank of colonel and have him go off unobserved by Tokyo and wander around the front, talk to airmen and report back on where and how, if at all, nuclear weapons would be practical.

Cohen's first flight outside the United States was on a troop-transport "jammed with infantrymen and their weapons," droning along "forever and a day" at 150 mph. Crossing the Han on on a reinforced concrete bridge that had taken numerous hits over the months by big conventional bombs and was often patched up by the enemy, he found a purpose for tactical A-Bombs, one of which would have dispatched the entire span into the river. Recently retaken but shattered, Seoul looked to him like photographs he had seen of Hiroshima after the Bomb, and years later he recalled the vista as "like the surface of the moon." Seeing the vastness of the ruins increased his skepticism about using big atom bombs on cities, for they added radioactivity to wholesale destruction and — aside from magnitude — accomplished no more than conventional explosives, he thought.

On "field trips" to air bases like K-13 (Suwon), K-14 (Kimpo) and K-6 (Pyongtaek), he talked to middle-level flying brass such as Colonel Francis Gabreski, an ace with World War II kills, and Colonel Frank Schmidt, who confided as the evening lengthened into midnight that he was in favor of getting out of Korea as soon as possible, since politics made the war unwinnable. "These guys I'll be sending up. I'll lose some. For what?"

Returning to Washington, Cohen told Schriever, "Benjy, you win." Cohen was convinced that it would be far less costly to use efficient low-yield tactical weapons on limited targets and that air bursts would not significantly en danger friendly troops advancing into affected areas. Air Force thinking nevertheless remained dominated by LeMay and fixed upon "total" weapons, while Cohen's morally sensitive scientific colleagues "were aghast that anyone would consider using atomic weapons again in Asia. The only theater for nuclear use they could think of was Europe. It was my first exposure to the 'Hiroshima' syndrome." Seeing Seoul devastated and useless after the enemy fought street-by-street and house-by-house to defend it did not "put the neutron bomb bee in my bonnet," Cohen claimed, but 10 years later he would devise a never-to-be-deployed neutron weapon that could take out the enemy with radioactivity while leaving much infrastructure intact.

The threat of nuclear thunderbolts would emanate less from MacArthur than from the Pentagon. But practical weapons for use in the field did not yet exist, and world opinion might have kept even them from Korea. Meanwhile, in the laboratory of Cohen's mind, the neutron bomb would develop from a Korean impulse he did not yet recognize. ***MR***

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NOTES

1. General George E. Stratemeyer to General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, 30 November 1950, Vandenberg Papers, quoted in Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 915.

2. All conference transcripts, unless otherwise cited, are from Dennis Merrill, ed., "The Documentary History of the Truman Presidency," University of Missouri, Kansas City, at <www.lexis-nexis,com/cispubs/brochures/truman_docs/truman.htm>.

3. General Curtis LeMay to Vandenberg, 2 and 6 December 1950, quoted in Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy During the Korean War," *International Security, Winter 1988-89*, 66.

4. MacArthur Memorial and Archive, Richmond, Virginia.

5. MacArthur Memorial and Archive. This request is described in many publications in various ways, including Cumings, 750.

6. A secret study commissioned by the Army at the Operations Research Office, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, concluded that 34 bombs would be inadequate to impede the estimated 120 Chinese divisions the communists could put in the field, and that 360 would be needed to inflict 30-percent casualties. Since only 26 Chinese divisions were estimated to have crossed into Korea by then, it was possible, according to the study, to stabilize a defensive line of 75 miles with radiation effect using only 15 bombs, but no mention was made of the consequences on friendly troops.

7. Albert Gore Sr., mid-April 1951, adapted by General Douglas MacArthur in off-the-record interviews with Washington Post columnists Jim Lucas and Bob Consodine, quoted in William Manchester, *American Caesar, Douglas MacArthur* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1978), 878.

8. Memoranda and communications, Documentary History and MacArthur Archive; Truman's comments on Symington's memo are from "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951," as quoted in Timothy J. Botti, Ace in the Hole: *Why the United States Did Not Use Nuclear Weapons in the Cold War, 1945 to 1965* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997), 37.

9. Memoranda on deploying nuclear bombs in March-April 1951 are from "The Documentary History, MacArthur Archive," and other sources. See also Stanley Weintraub, *MacArthur's War: Korea and the Undoing of an American Hero* (New York: Free Press, 2000), chapters 13 and 16.

10. The young non-Ph.D. physicist was Sam Cohen, who spoke with me about his Korean War experience on 23 Jan 1998. See also Cohen, *The Truth About the Neutron Bomb. The Inventor of the Bomb Speaks Out* (New York, Morrow and Company, 1983), 28-37, 176-79. For further background on the tactical bomb program, see Gordon Dean and Roger M. Anders, eds., *Forging the Atomic Shield* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1987); Chuck Hansen, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons: The Secret History* (New York: Orion Books, 1988), esp. 48-55, 134-35, 191; Richard Rhodes, *Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1995), 130-31.

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